

The Solution to the Problem

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 October 2016

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] I'm going to be this morning in the book of Romans.

! You know, Paul wrote the book of Romans.! We know that because the Bible says Paul wrote the book of Romans.! He says that in 13 books. Some of you know a little of the inside track on that. But we're going to be in Romans, the third chapter. And I titled this The Solution to the Problem. So let's get into the problem.

There can be no debate concerning the depth of depravity of the human race.

That's not subject to debate. The Bible is very clear on that. Experience is very clear on that.

[1:15] Man's inhumanity to man. And ladies, that's the generic term for man. That includes you all.

But his inhumanity to his fellow man is deepening and accelerating. You see that on Fox News. You see that in the newspapers. My officers and I see it every day. There is always a question that arises when a tragedy strikes our nation or strikes the world.

People ask, where was God? Where was God when this happened?

Where was God when the Twin Towers fell in New York City, taking nearly 3,000 people to their deaths?

[2:24] Where was God when the Pentagon was attacked? Where was God a little closer to home when the Murrah Building blew up with 168 souls dead, including a number of children in a nursery?

And so it goes. Because there is an answer to those questions, I will tell you where God was during each of those tragic events.

He was precisely where individuals wanted him to be. For some, he was the very center of their life. He was on the throne of their heart, being committed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For others, he was far away, having been rejected and spurned and mocked, and his very existence denied.

[3:52] God is precisely where he should be during all of life's tragedies. The problem for humanity is the sin nature.

The prophet in the Old Testament said, the human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. And then he asked a question, who can know it?

Who can know it? In the New Testament, in the New Testament we read, and we'll read this morning, that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

There is none who does good. There is none righteous. There's not even anyone who chooses God. All out of Romans 3. And so it goes.

I do have an observation. I don't believe that we as people, even the people of God, have ever fully grasped the depth of the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden and what that did to the human race.

[5:13] I don't think we've ever come to full grips with that. And maybe we're not able to. Maybe we can't. But we have never plumbed the depths of what sin does in our relationship with the Lord.

As a race of people in the Garden of Eden, remember the human family was not merely wounded.

We weren't wounded. Had we been wounded, we could have reached for the first aid kit or a bandage or some type of ointment and rubbed it on the wound and seen it go away.

The problem in the Garden is that we, and that is the human race, died. We died in the very moments that our first parents chose the path of disobedience.

This death was spiritual. And ultimately physical. But at the moment disobedience entered the human race through Adam and Eve, we as a human race became separated from God.

[6:48] Everything that has flowed from the wellhead of disobedience has been tainted, has been polluted.

sin separates us from God and he who is holy will not have communion with that which is unholy. The separation for our human parents, Adam and Eve, happened immediately. It happened immediately. And we know that it happened immediately because the first thing they did is they tried to hide from God.

That begs a question that I've never been able to answer. Where do you go to hide from God?

Where do we go to do that? They entered into a human religion called fig leaf religion.

They thought if we could just cover our sinfulness, we'll make ourselves acceptable to God. That has never happened and it will never happen. So they hid.

[8:08] Ultimately, the separation was such that they were banished from the garden and in fact, the entire garden was removed from the earth.

It was taken away. The sin nature within the human family began to manifest itself in unimaginable ways. We can't even possibly comment on all of them this morning.

But do you remember when Adam and Eve had two sons? Cain and Abel? And there was a murder? So they have two boys and you have a murderer and a murder victim.

Cain killed his brother Abel. Within just a few generations of that, of Adam, God destroyed the entire human race on earth sparing only Noah and his family.

A total of eight people. A few generations after the ark, we see God coming down and confusing the languages of the people so great was their sin.

[9:26] And so it has gone down through the ages. Our sin nature has touched everything and it has polluted the human race down to this very day.

It is safe to say because it is biblical that a war broke out in the Garden of Eden between God and man.

And that war has raged for generations and millennia and it is raging still. And billions, multiple billions of human souls have perished in that war physically, spiritually, eternally.

Examine what God has done for us. He called out a people in the Old Testament for himself called the Hebrews and they sinned.

He gave them His law and while He was busy giving Moses the law the people were in the valley making a golden calf to worship.

[10:47] He sent prophets and they were killed. And He sent His Son and the human race crucified Him.

and so it is gone. Do we have any hope? Can we extricate ourselves from the sin problem?

Well that has been asked through the ages and it was especially on the mind of Martin Luther, the great reformer. While people will be celebrating Halloween in a couple of weeks we'll be celebrating Reformation Day.

Whether you know it or not we and that's Highland Park and all churches really in North America for the most part are a product of God's work that He did through Luther.

Luther was going to be a lawyer and God spared him. thank goodness I have some meetings with lawyers this week so pray for me.

[12:08] Luther was going to be a lawyer and God removed that from his mind by sending a lightning bolt. Luther was journeying across the land in Germany and he was suddenly caught in a thunderstorm and a lightning bolt nearly killed him.

And he cried out to God and he said if you will spare me I will become a Catholic priest and God spared him not to become a Catholic priest but to become the great reformer of the church.

When Luther joined the priesthood he witnessed great sins among its membership. they had indulgences where you could buy parents or grandparents who had died out of purgatory.

It was costly. They had other tricks to get into your bank account. Luther saw this and much more that I won't even mention because we have children in here today.

But Luther was a witness to all this. and he cried out as did Job in the book that bears his name and he said this can a man be made right with God?

[14:00] Luther was beginning to question whether that was even possible. But he wanted an answer so he sought the solitude of a monastery in the German Alps.

This provided no solution for him and he continued to struggle with sin. Now at the monastery

Luther and the other young priests were expected and required to attend confession once a day.

The young priests would line up and one by one they would go into the confessional for absolution.

Now we're talking about a monastery in the 16th century.

Those places back then weren't necessarily plagued with what is plaguing the Catholic priesthood today. You read about it all the time. But we can only imagine what some of their confessions were in the 16th century.

Last night, I'm making these up, last night after lights out, I burned a candle under my cover so I could read.

[15 : 28] Tonight at supper, I coveted Brother Ralph's mashed potatoes. Let's face it, how much trouble could you get into in a remote German monastery in the 16th century?

But when it came time for Luther to confess, a groan was heard throughout the facility. Each young priest took a minute or two.

Luther would confess the sins that he had committed in the monastery for six hours, for eight hours, for ten hours, and it was once recorded that Luther confessed to the priest for 15 straight hours. 15 hours of confession. And when he got back to his modest room, he remembered a sin that he had failed to confess.

It devastated him. He returned to the confessional and he asked this priest, can I start over? Now the Catholic fathers running the monastery, they met and they said, you know, this guy Luther, he's a malingerer, he's getting out of work, he doesn't want to mop the floors, he doesn't want to clean the kitchen.

[17 : 03] They thought he was trying to get out of work, but they were wrong. Luther was at war with himself over the sin question, and he wanted an answer to his question, can a man be made right with God?

That's what he was seeking. One evening in his room, Luther was reading from a scroll, the third chapter of Romans, and he came to this passage, Romans chapter 3 verse 21 and 22, but now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. and Luther couldn't believe what he had just read. He thought his eyes were playing tricks on him. He kept reading it over and over, the righteousness of God, the righteousness of God, and for Luther, the light bulb came on.

the answer to the sin problem was not man. The answer certainly wasn't Luther.

[18 : 52] The answer to the sin problem was God. Specifically, the answer was that God had provided a way to deal with the sin problem, by providing his own righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus.

Did you hear that, beloved? God does not build a spiritual house based upon our righteousness. He does not look down and pick people that are worthy for his salvation.

We don't have any worthiness to offer him. God graces his children, the lost in the depravity of sin with his own righteousness.

That righteousness is manifested in the life and the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. This is a righteousness that comes down from heaven and is bestowed upon all those who receive it by faith.

[20 : 13] And so sure is this righteousness that it does not depend upon our faith but rather upon the faith that God bestows upon us.

in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8 and 9 which I'm sure most of you have memorized. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not as a result of works so that no one may boast.

There's no boasting on possessing this faith. It comes from God. Now what do we know about this righteousness? Sadly I must hurry through and each point that we're going to express here today could literally be an individual message.

But let me complete the passage we're looking at today. Let me read the entire passage through the first part of verse 25. But now by the way whenever you read that but now or but God really pay attention to that.

When God says that in the scripture he's got something he wants to tell us. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been manifested being witnessed by the law and the prophets even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.

[21 : 44] For there is no distinction. for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus whom God displayed

publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith.

I want to say a few things about this passage and the first thing I want to say is this this righteousness is apart from legalism but now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been manifested it's been put on display and the word but is interesting it stands between human depravity and our inability to please God and God's own provision of a way to himself that's what that word but covers in scripture the righteousness that saves is apart from laws and rules and regulations and festivals and keeping certain sabbaths and dare

I say and I do this with a little fear and trepidation it is even apart from the ten commandments the ten commandments were never given to save the ten commandments are an expression of the holiness of God the perfection of God and they are to show us our hopeless condition and our need for a savior who has fulfilled every commandment now the law is not dead but we're dead to it ten commandments are still a moral guide but we are in Christ we're dead to the law the second point I want to make this morning is this righteousness is built on revelation being witnessed by the law and the prophets this righteousness is apart from law but it is witnessed to by both the law and the prophets the law of God and the prophets all pointed the way to Christ

I love what the late Dr. DeHaan used to say Jesus Christ is in every verse of scripture sometimes he is very obvious sometimes he's in the shadows but until you found him in that verse you haven't understood that verse this book is the revelation of Jesus Christ this whole book Genesis to maps is the revelation of Jesus Christ the prophets spoke of the day of Christ and longed to see it the law is described as a mirror we look into a mirror it reflects back and we see ourselves for what we are when you read the law of God and especially the moral law the ten commandments we see what we are

I had a great debate with a friend and he believed in conditional salvation if you make a mistake mess up you're going to lose your salvation so I pinned him down a little bit and I said let me ask you this is it any sin or has it got to be a pretty significant sin I mean if you spit your gum on the sidewalk are you forever going to be lost or no no no no it has got to be really significant real significant I said okay I understand what about violating the greatest commandment to love God with all our hearts all our minds all our strength 24 hours a day your entire life you can never make a mistake have you ever fulfilled that commandment well no well isn't that pretty serious that's the greatest commandment and

[27:07] I've never seen a guy look back at me that was just emptied and he said what do I do I said you lean on the everlasting arms you lean on the everlasting arms of Christ the one who has fulfilled that you cling to the Lord Jesus the law is a mirror the law is also a school master or a task master keeps us on the straight and narrow the next thing I want to mention is this righteousness is acquired by faith the righteousness Luther sought the same righteousness you and I must have to see God is acquired by faith even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ through faith in Jesus Christ I'm always amazed when people say

I believe in God I just don't believe in Jesus wow you are most to be pitied you are most to be pitied Paul is speaking of the absolute and perfect righteousness of God and not the imperfect righteousness of man human achievement can never rise to the level of being joined to God you can only come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ this is why human religion is such a depravity before God human religion and there's a lot of them right more than we can even name human religion is mankind's efforts to reach God and they always fail true

Christianity is not a religion true Christianity is God reaching down to mankind and it always succeeds man by the way if you get a dictionary old enough when Diane and I used to go to antique stores and she would never let me go near the breakables I don't know why I only broke a few things but she let me go to the old book section and if you find Webster's dictionary and by the way Webster was a believer if you find one old enough about 120 years look up the word religion you know what the meaning is a return to bondage what did Christ battle on earth organize religion what crucified him organize religion man imagines that he's good enough to reach

God with his own righteousness even though he doesn't possess any none do you realize that in a recent poll 70% of evangelical Christians believed that mankind is basically good that people are basically good that doesn't square with scripture does it scriptures don't say that read Romans chapter 3 start about verse 10 through about verse 18 this afternoon that is an affront to reveal scripture well what is saving faith it is a far cry from what many teach in our day it goes beyond simple affirmation it goes beyond reciting a prayer dreamed up by some guy who wants to distribute

tracts saving faith is a placing of oneself totally in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ it involves the complete person the will emotions intellect and we can say it is also a mystery when Nicodemus asked Jesus what it meant Jesus said it is like the wind what a description it is like the wind no one knows where the wind starts no one knows where the wind is going to stop but it blows and saving faith is like a wind and it blows on whomever God wants it to blow on next this righteousness is provided for all who believe for all those who believe for there is no distinction what does that mean we're all in the same barrel as a human race all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

[32:26] God anyone who believes and by the way that's a Greek word *pistou* it means trust commit your life to it goes beyond the English translation of believe anyone who believes will be saved there is no distinction rich people may come poor people may black and white every race known to man may come people are going to be in glory from every tribe and tongue and nation being connected to voice of the martyrs I tell people you're going to meet a whole lot of people in heaven from Asia going to meet a lot of people from China we just had a trip to

China didn't we Mike every nation every tongue every tribe and those who come Jesus says he will in no wise cast out people accuse me of being reformed or a Calvinist when people ask me if I'm a Calvinist I have one question tell me what that is and I'll tell you whether I am one or not and no one has ever given me the correct answer the problem they have with it they say well but you put bars on your church doors you lock the doors you lock the windows no we don't we do what Jesus did throw them open hold your arms out and say come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden I'll give you rest that's what Jesus is saying right now in the 21st century and yet there's people driving up and down that road out there right now that are impervious to it don't want anything to do with it and if you will come to

Christ he will never cast you out there is no distinction we all come with one thing in common we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God I had a friend in another denomination 30 years ago say well what did you bring to the cross to get saved I said a bucket overflowing with sin that's all I had to offer I didn't have anything else nothing else to offer next this righteousness is given freely through grace being justified as a gift by his grace three words there that we could spend a lot of time on justification gift and his grace

I guess that's four words being justified speaks of the great doctrine of justification it concerns me and maybe I'm wrong but if we passed out paper right now and said write down what justification means there probably some of us that couldn't do it and it is crucial doctrine essential justification is a legal declaration that God makes concerning his children at the moment of rebirth he makes a as a judge of the universe he makes a judicial declaration!

what does he declare he declares us to be just there's a common phrase we hear it often related to the gift of justification this legal declaration it is that God treats us in justification just as if we had never sinned now bear in mind he's taken those and put them on Christ they didn't just disappear okay he put them on Jesus but it goes much further than that that's not an inaccurate phrase but it doesn't go far enough in justification God treats us just like we were Jesus and I don't know about you but I want to get down on my knees and cry out for thanks to

[37:51] God and Christ he treats us as if we were his son Jesus try and get your hands around that concept this righteousness is given to us as a gift it is not earned it is not deserved it is unmerited it is unmerited we are granted his righteousness righteousness that Luther sought we are granted his righteousness by his grace unmerited unearned undeserved that is why he can declare in Romans 8:1 there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in

Christ Jesus how much condemnation does God have stored up for you as a believer none they were all placed on Christ you mean we have a license to sin no we have the liberty not to do I sin yes how much more than I want to but that is one of my favorite passages of scripture no condemnation let me read that whole verse there is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus and then he says this who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit I'm going to go home and deal with that today maybe some of you want to this righteousness is accomplished by redemption through the redemption which is in

Christ Jesus redemption carries with it the idea of delivering we have been delivered from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of light it also carries with it the idea of a price tag grace is free beloved but it is not cheap there is no such thing as cheap grace it cost the son of God everything he who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God the very

righteousness Luther was seeking that term redemption by the way was commonly used to describe freeing a slave from bondage and there are people today that say well I've never been a slave we've all been a slave to sin and those in

Christ have been set free from slavery to sin to become willing slaves to the Lord Jesus Christ and this righteousness was paid by an atoning sacrifice whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation or as propitiation in his blood through faith because we have no righteousness of our own God graciously bestows his righteousness upon us and that's why Luther was amazed because he kept reading the righteousness of God he bestows his righteousness through the propitiation or the atoning sacrifice of his son this sacrifice was not done in a secret place was it publicly on the hill of Calvary God displayed his son publicly as a propitiation now that is propitiation is not a word we use much anymore it means the appeasement it can mean the satisfaction the atoning sacrifice when God sees something in us he is satisfied when God sees something in us his wrath toward our sins is appeased God is appeased now what is it that God sees with this magnificent vision of his he sees the atoning blood of Christ the blood covering for our sins and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins you know

[43:45] I meet people at times I have trouble with that we'll take it up with upper management we're all just labor take it up with the Lord Jesus Christ take it up with the father without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin remember when the angel of death came to Egypt to kill the firstborn the Hebrews had been instructed to apply the blood of an innocent lamb on the doorposts and lintel of their homes and they were told when the angel of death passes over he will see the blood and he will pass by or pass over your home that's where we get the word Passover it's not rocket science is it the angel of death came and passed over when

God sees the blood of his dear precious son applied to your heart and to your life he is satisfied he reserves no condemnation for you his wrath passes over not because of who we are but because of who his son is and the power of his son blood that has been applied to the doorpost of our hearts to the very doorpost of our hearts and the question we have to ask is are we covered by the blood of Christ I can't answer that for you Billy Graham was asked one time how many people do you know for certain have been saved through your ministry and he said one

I'm certain of one me he said probably two I'm pretty certain of Ruth my wife who's now with the Lord if you were to stand before God this day would he say to you I am satisfied I have no wrath reserved for you there is no condemnation stored up for you my son died for your sins and they are appeased they are atoned for he is your propitiation and may I say this if you're here this morning and you cannot say that with conviction I would like to suggest there's a possibility you're in grave danger if there's anyone here that can't say that with conviction my sins are atoned for you're in grave danger don't let another moment pass that you don't cast yourself upon the mercy of God and that is found only in Christ Jesus our Lord you know the Bible makes it very clear that today is a day of salvation and I thought about that over the years and there's a reason for that tomorrow never comes do you realize that there's no such thing as tomorrow it doesn't exist when it gets here it's today and the Lord says today is the day don't let another moment don't let another hour don't let another day pass that you don't cast yourselves upon his mercy Thank you.